

Guest Teacher:

Jude: the Burden to Contend for the Faith

BY PASTOR GINO GERACI



Scholars suggest that the short but powerful Book of Jude was written sometime between AD 64 and 80. The book was written to Christians familiar with the Old Testament. In this single-chapter letter, there are 25 verses and eight illustrations from the Old Testament; the KJV translation contains 613 words.

The Book of Jude is a warning against apostasy and apostates. The book begins in verses 1 and 2 with Jude's prayer and description of true believers—those who are called, sanctified by God, and preserved in Jesus Christ. Verses 3 and 4 continue with Jude's purpose for writing, prophetic perception, and warning against apostasy. Then, Jude describes the characteristics and judgment of false teachers in verses 5-16. The book concludes with an exhortation to believers (verses 17-25).

We Are in a Battle

Someone recently said to me, "I hate confrontation." The remark came from an unexpected source—a highly trained and decorated soldier. He is not alone in his attitude. The truth is, most people hate confrontation.

But the Christian life is not always a playground; sometimes it is a battleground. The Book of Jude can be viewed as basic training for the battle, a type of Bible boot camp for believers. The book begins with Jude's burden to contend for the faith. What faith? **"The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"** (verse 3).

Jude's original intention in writing this book was to encourage the saints in our common salvation (verse 3). Salvation is a worthy and edifying subject. But in the middle of this verse, Jude switches gears and feels compelled to warn us: we are in a battle and we must fight against false teaching and false teachers.

Paul gave a similar warning to his young protégé Timothy, **"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart**

from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Warnings about Apostates

Peter wrote, probably earlier, **"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction"** (2 Peter 2:1).

Peter warned: *The apostates are coming*; Jude announced: *The apostates are here!*

An apostate is a person who has confessed the truth about Jesus Christ and then seeks to change, walk away from, or fight against that truth. The word apostate comes from the Greek root word *pisteo*, which means trust or belief. The Greek prefix "a" negates the root word; thus, *apistos* means faithless or unbelieving, and *apisteo* means to disbelieve or be unfaithful. An apostate is a person who has walked away from faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word, or who has embraced false teaching and false teachers who undermine the Person, ministry, and message of Jesus. An apostate has walked away from what some have called essential historical Christianity.

How does such a transformation take place? How does one go from friend of the truth to enemy of the truth?

Consider an example of a man who wrote that Christ's work leads us to believe that only He can save us and that without Him we cannot achieve our purpose and are doomed by God. These profound thoughts were written in 1835 by a 17-year-old who was confirmed into the Lutheran church the previous year. The essay, which was written in order to graduate from high school, tackled the essence, necessity, and consequences of the believer's union with Jesus according to John 15:1-14.

This young man explained that our union with Christ bears fruit, which is the believer's willingness to sacrifice himself for his fellow man. He went on to say that the joy the Epicureans sought from their superficial philosophy was in vain because joy is known only to those whose hearts are united with Christ and to God because of Christ.

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Yet less than a decade later, this prodigy, 26-year-old Karl Heinrich Marx, turned his back on his Christian beliefs. Credited with the founding of modern communism, he went on to promote a militant atheism that was free from what he dubbed "the mind-numbing effects of religion." Marx's impact on the world led Moody Monthly, in June 1988, to call him one of the most influential figures of the 19th century.

Marx did not begin life as a communist. Sun Myung Moon did not begin life as a "moonie." Marshall Applewhite of Heaven's Gate fame did not begin life as a self-loathing lunatic. David Koresh in Waco did not begin life as a self-proclaimed end-time prophet. People join cults for all kinds of reasons. Perhaps the biggest reason is that the church failed to love them, teach them, and ground them in Jesus Christ.

Peter, James, Paul, and Jude tried to warn them, and the Bible still sounds those words of warning today. We would all do well to heed such warnings. ☞

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